



THE
NATIONAL PREACHER.

Vol. XLII, No. 12]

DECEMBER, 1866.

[Whole No. 1,011

SERMON XXX.*

BY REV. LAURENS P. HICKOK, D.D., LL.D.

PRESIDENT OF UNION COLLEGE, SCHENECTADY, NEW YORK.

**THE COMPLETE IDEA OF THE WORLD'S CONVERSION TO
JESUS CHRIST.**

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."—Philippians, ii. 10, 11.

THE conversion of the world of mankind to a godly life is exclusively a Christian idea. Avarice may dream of possessing the wealth of the world, ambition may covet the power of the world, poetry and philosophy may fondly talk of a golden age, but that this world of sinners shall one day become completely holy, is the grand idea no where found, save in the revealed gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ideas govern the world. Armies and navies are begotten of ideas, and they are used for nothing else than that they may

*Delivered before the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, at its 57th Anniversary, at Pittsfield, Mass., in the Church of Rev. Dr. Todd, Sept. 25th, 1866.

make these ideas to become realities. And the power of ideas in controlling the church is quite as conspicuous as in governing the world. The church never rises above, and never goes beyond her idea of Christian life and duty, neither in her experimental piety, nor in her missionary zeal and effort. The idea once fully reached and the impulse is exhausted, and all further exertion ceases.

The text contains the general gospel idea of the world's conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ, and this even more comprehensive than our world, for it includes "things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth," and thereby affirms of angels, men and devils, that either by constraint or willingly, they shall all bow to the mediatorial sovereignty of Jesus Christ. So far, however, as this is to inspire our work, the idea will be comprehensively attained and its missionary impulse exhausted, when all the dwellers upon our globe shall have been turned to the Lord. But the general idea is given in a peculiar form, enabling us to determine what is the essential completeness of this conversion itself. This is of deeper interest than any question of its comprehensiveness, since our satisfaction in the numbers converted must be found in the excellency and completeness of the conversion effected. When all are converted to the Lord, or so fast as any are converted, we need to know more especially what this conversion is when carried out to its full measure. This may be found from the text selected, more directly than perhaps from any other passage of Scripture.

The great importance of apprehending this Christian idea in all its completeness is, as we have said, because no one rises above nor goes beyond his completed idea. The man who has equaled his full thought of the Christian life in his own experience will make no further effort for higher attainments, nor will he urge others to any greater measures of growing sanctification. Our missionaries who go out to the heathen, and we who at home support them by our contributions and our prayers, have each of us some idea of what these heathen are to become when converted to Christianity, and neither our missionaries nor we ourselves will labor or pray to get our converted heathen conformed to any other standard than our own complete idea of Christian faith and practice.

Permitted, then, as we are by a kind Providence to convene so auspiciously on another Anniversary of our American Board of Missions, we may perhaps most profitably open our meeting by the important enquiry—What is the full import of the inspired declaration, "that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father?" This will be equivalent to the question—WHAT IS THE INSPIRED IDEA OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN ITS FULL MEASURE?

An old Rabinical Legend represents heaven as divided into seven concentric spheres. In the first, or nearest to the earth, are the souls least sanctified. Rising thence in ascent as in sanctification to the highest, in this, the seventh sphere, the perfected forever dwell amid the unclouded glories of Jehovah. All are accepted of God in every sphere, and the lowest may hereafter rise to the highest, but their appropriate spheres are determined by the specific amount of holiness attained. And here, perhaps, we might assume different degrees in sanctification, and plausibly illustrate their distinction, up to this perfect number of seven separate grades of holiness ; but I shall have accomplished my present purpose, if I can secure your recognition of *three* pretty definitely marked phases of Christian character and experience. The last only is the gospel idea of the Christian life in its completeness, for the realization of which none of us should cease to labor and pray till it shall have obtained universal prevalence in the world.

I. That form of Christian life which manifests itself mainly in kindness.

Kindness, as the name imports, is a regard for the welfare of our kind. It may sometimes be known as humanity, an interest in human beings ; or philanthropy, a love to man ; or benevolence, a wishing well to our race ; but by whatever name it may be known, we now fix our attention upon the thing itself, and attain a definite apprehension of what the Christian life is, when controlled mainly by the law of kindness.

Human experience has its frequent periods of joy and gladness. Ordinarily, life passes through many scenes brightened by plenty and prosperity, and sweetened with peace and social harmony. And yet, in our fallen world, human life is also through frequent seasons of sadness and sorrow. If not literally sighing and weeping, yet is a large portion of our experience darkened by disappointments and bereavements, wants and cares, so that often the shadows exceed the sunshine, and multitudes of every generation travel on perpetually "through a vale of tears."

Christian kindness will manifest its ready sympathy with both of these forms of human experience. It will gladden at the view of human happiness, and sadden at the sight of human wretchedness. It rejoices with the joyous, and weeps with the weeping. It identifies itself with others, and so lives in their life, that it will forget its own griefs in their joy, and refuse to taste its own abundance while it knows of another that is pining in want. And yet this Christian kindness will not exhaust itself in mere sympathetic emotion, however sincere and deep. It is eminently practical, and prompts to instant and untiring activity. It

stretches forth the hand of charity; it quickens the feet on their errands of mercy; and loosens the tongue to give utterance to its messages of tenderness and counsels of love. It stimulates exertion so far as may be, to rescue the miserable, to relieve the suffering, to defend the injured, and to protect the weak.

The monuments of Christian kindness stand thick in all gospel lands. It has built and endowed hospitals and asylums, retreats and houses of refuge, and made public provision for the poor, the helpless sick, the deaf and blind, the insane and unfortunate of all classes. It has associated individual activity into combined exertion to aid in all benevolent supplies of bodily need, and is more especially Christian in widely meeting the spiritual wants and removing the moral maladies and woes of mankind. Perhaps Christian charity was never so active as now, and never pushing on its plans so systematically and comprehensively, to reach and remove all forms of human ill that come within the scope of human help.

But let us carefully attain a fair and clear estimate of the intrinsic excellency of this Christian kindness. What amount of genuine Scripture holiness, or hearty devotion to God, does it include? It is here assumed that it has its source in real Christianity, and that it is the exhibition of true experimental piety. A Mahometan may possess and cultivate great constitutional kindness; an infidel may give exhibitions of much philanthropy. All this may come from the sympathies and native sensibilities of our common humanity. But the kindness we here speak of, we suppose to be the grace of a new heart, and the fruit of gospel regeneration. It loves man because man is the creature of God, and the subject of divine redemption. It expects to make man happy only by making him Christian. All these public monuments of benevolence belong exclusively to Christian and not to pagan nations. And yet Christian as it is, how highly shall we estimate its holiness? Where is the real force of the disposition and feeling directed and exhausted? Evidently the most of it is absorbed in the merely human interest. The great evil felt is human suffering, and the great good sought is deliverance from suffering. The motives applied and the appeals made are mainly to human sympathy. The saddest story of human woe, the most touching tale of distress, is spontaneously assumed, and practically found to be, the most effective means to rouse the public mind and move the church to afford the desired help.

It is the same in our plans of associated benevolence. The cause of temperance is to be promoted by prayer and preaching truth, and yet when thus made a Christian cause, the prayer is made fervid, and the truths are derived, very much from the miseries of the drunkard, and the suffering and wretchedness of his family and the community, from his intemperate habit.

The abolition of slavery, though God's overruling hand has abolished it with us in a more terrible and summary manner, was all along steadily and strongly urged from considerations of its inhumanity, and the hope of success was made very much to turn upon vivid exhibitions of its injuries and cruelties. Our cause of Foreign Missions has taken deep and strong hold upon the Christian community, and yet this most sublime and most sacred Christian work is very commonly argued from the facts of heathen wretchedness and inhuman torture. We are made to shiver with horror at the terrible details of child-murder, the hook-swing, the suttee-burning, and the miserable victims of superstition crushed beneath the car of their bloody gods. Yea, even the salvation of immortal souls, both at home and among the heathen, is pressed as a matter for Christian prayer and labor, very much from considerations of human kindness only. Their misery in hell, and their happiness in heaven, are the great motives of appeal from Christian pulpits to Christian congregations.

The prominent evil is human misery ; the great burden is human suffering from human cruelty and wrong ; "Man's inhumanity to man." The grand consummation of Christian effort is human relief from human woe. Charity and prayer, the church and the Bible, are for man's happiness only, and even the Holy Ghost and the Saviour are needed, and are only to be valued, as means to exclude man's misery and minister to man's wants. Humanity is thus put as the ultimate end and measure, and even God and heaven come to be estimated for man's sake. If man may be relieved from suffering in this world and the next, the Christian's prayer is answered and his religion satisfied. There is much that seems to say, All that I value a crucified Saviour and the Divine comforter for is, they are seen to be necessary to redeem man from wretchedness and secure that he shall be happy. Here is Christianity exhibiting itself controllingly in the form of kindness. It cheerfully makes great sacrifices, and undertakes the most self denying enterprises, for human relief and human happiness.

Suppose, then, this religion of Christian kindness to be universally diffused through the nations. Every people, and every person amid all peoples, lives and loves in cordial Christian brotherhood. How great the change over the whole surface of our planet ! War has ceased ; the oppressor has thrown his broken rod away. And yet is this the complete idea of the world's conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ ? Is the full import of the bowing knees, and the confessing tongues, to Him who is Lord of all, here brought out ? Much as every Christian heart will rejoice to anticipate such a good time coming in our world, yet will not the enlightened and highly sanctified Christian hope

and expectation be in this completely satisfied. He cannot as a Christian have habitually and intelligently prayed, "Thy kingdom come," and then look round and say in this, thy kingdom Lord has fully come. If this is truly Christian attainment and experience, and herein is heaven begun below, yet surely must we say, that this is heaven only in its lowest sphere.

II. We advance in the completeness of the idea, *when we contemplate Christian activity in the exhibition of deep love to the Redeemer.*

A thoroughly convicted sinner, bowed down under his burden of guilt, crying out in the bitterness of his anxious spirit, "what must I do to be saved?" may graciously receive such a view of a suffering Saviour as shall immediately melt his soul in confident submission and love. To such a soul, at once there appears a beauty and a preciousness in the newly-found Saviour, which his heart will want words to express. Every utterance of his lips will be joy and praise. His feelings may seem enthusiastic, and his joy extravagant, to such as have known nothing of his deep experience. He makes use of the most expressive Scripture language, and the words of the most impassioned poetry, to speak out his gratitude and love to Jesus. Christ is to him "the chief among ten thousand, and one altogether lovely." None in heaven but Him, and none on earth to be compared with Him. His life is a perpetual hymn of joy and praise. He testifies, in words none too strong for his emotions, that—

"When Christ revealed his gracious name,
And changed my mournful state,
My rapture seemed a pleasing dream,
The joy appeared so great."

His own praises are too poor to requite the wondrous grace, and he would have all others join in grateful thanksgiving. He wants all nature to conspire in his enraptured song.

"Oh! for this love let rocks and hills,
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues,
The Saviour's praises speak."

He lives on, thus, in faith and prayer, and while his emotions become more chastened, his love to his Redeemer grows deeper, and the joy in his salvation is the more abundant from day to day. "The love of Christ constrains him to live, not henceforth unto himself, but unto him who died for him and rose again." The heathen convert to Christ participates in all this admiring gratitude and praise.

And now in this experience, the principle in conversion works much deeper than the law of Christian kindness. The sanctify-

ing elements come out more distinctly, and control the life more strongly and more completely. There is as much Christian kindness as in the case of one under the former division; he feels and manifests as deep an interest in the happiness of his fellow-men as the other. He enters in to every plan of benevolence with as warm a zeal; he hates as intensely all cruelty and oppression; he gives and prays as abundantly for the heathen; he labors as painfully to "pluck sinners as brands from the burning." But all this is manifestly now, not so much for man's sake. The whole Christian activity is from a far more penetrating and all-pervading love to the Lord Jesus Christ. He would have the miserable to be happy; the oppressed to go out free; the ignorant to be enlightened; the guilty and condemned to be pardoned and saved; but all this is with him for Christ's sake, and in Christ's name, to the praise of his grace, and that it may magnify his redeeming love and mercy. His Saviour has done so much for him and for a lost world, and his gratitude is so full and deep for this, that he cannot permit anything to come in competition with it. If every human woe were relieved, and every wrong redressed, and every sinner pardoned; this could not fill his desire till he should see his Saviour have all the praise. Palms and harps and crowns of immortal glory; they are nothing to him except as every palm-branch waves, and every harp is struck, and every crown is cast down, to the honor of Him whom in his love he crowns Lord of all.

But we have here a careful, though a very decided discrimination to be made. Supreme love to Jesus Christ should be consistent with supreme love to the triune Jehovah, and thus stand in connection with that which gives Christian completeness, but it may often be in such a form as shall make the Christian life and spirit quite defective. In what aspect is the Saviour viewed, on which side of the Redeemer's face does the light shine, that he is so admired and loved? If it is looking at the constituted Mediator mainly in man's interest and on man's behalf, while there may be so much devotion to God as shall evince a genuine Christian conversion, still this Christian experience will come short of the fullness, and stand quite back from the completeness of the great gospel idea.

There is a view in which Christ is supreme. The sinner can look to nothing else. Hope and help can come to lost man from no other quarter. Man's morality, his legal obedience, his ritual observances and mortifying penances are utterly worthless. To expiate guilt and take the curse of the broken law away, nothing but Christ and him crucified can have any possible validity. God can pardon and justify for Christ's sake, but from no other consideration. Christ is "*all in all*" in man's salvation. But there is another view in which Christ and his mediation are su-

bordinate, and which view is important both for man and God. Here, he is means and not end; an instrument whose value is only in the use made of it. The incarnation and entire redemptive work form only the scaffolding by which to erect a glorious spiritual temple, and when that temple shall be completed, the scaffolding shall be taken down. "Then shall the Son himself be subject to Him who did put all things under him, that God (the triune Jehovah) may be *all in all*." 1 Cor. xv. 28. Here, Christ as Saviour, and man as saved, are all made to minister to the higher end of the divine honor and glory.

Now, the form of Christian life and action, as considered under this second division of discourse, takes Christ and his great work of Redemption mainly in the interest of humanity. It loves him more in the view of what he has done for man, than in the view of what he has done for God. It is the deep emotional view as coming out in our revival scenes, and communion seasons, and in what is esteemed to be, and very probably is, the highest religious experience, and spiritual attainment, of the greater portion of the active Christianity of the present day. It is sincere and ardent love to Jesus, and calling out for him and his cause great and willing self-sacrifices; but the Jesus that it so loves and serves is seen as weeping, bleeding, dying, and interceding for lost and ruined man. The Saviour, in whose praise the heart is so warm, is Christ in his pity, his travail of soul for the perishing, and is thus higher in exercise than Christian kindness, but is still love and gratitude for Jesus' kindness shown to sinners. It preaches Christ as the great orthodox central truth of the Gospel scheme, but it is mainly Christ as all in all for the sinners' salvation. It bows the knee, and confesses Christ is Lord, but is more in the gratulation of man delivered than "to the glory of God the Father."

Were there then such a Christian life brought out, and such a spirit of love and praise to Jesus spread over all the earth, it would doubtless fit for a higher heaven than the life of Christian kindness, but it is still mainly to the Saviour, as he brings "peace on earth and good will to men," rather than the full chorus of the upper heaven which keeps first in the song, "Glory to God in the highest."

III. *The complete idea comes out fully, in reverent and child-like communion with the Holy God as our Heavenly Father.*

A true conception of God, adequately apprehending his holiness, glory, and majesty, must necessarily awaken great fear and awe. All intelligences must stand in his presence in uncovered homage. Here angels bow, and reverently veil their faces. Cherubim and Seraphim cry continually, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty; heaven and earth are full of thy glory."

No mortal can stand before him without feeling the force of the direction to Moses before the burning bush, "Put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place where thou standest is holy ground."

To every wicked man, the conscious approach to such a presence must be terrible. It is this which makes the view of present death so dreadful to the sinner. He then wakes from his long, delusive dream, to find this holy God directly before him. To all the guilty "God is a consuming fire;" and even to a good man, standing in his own name, such a meeting with God is awful. So terrible was the sight that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." An unsinning angel may appear with covered face before him, but sinful man must ever, as at the first transgression, hide from his presence.

And yet this very God, in his holiness, has also of his own mercy provided a way wherein sinners may come to him, and commune with him, and feel no tormenting fear. When we look to him through his own constituted Mediator, who has taken our nature and borne our sorrows, the terror of his presence is softened to paternal benignity, and our feeling becomes that of filial reverence. Distressing dismay subsides into child-like respect and adoring love. The redeemed sinner can now stand beneath that blazing eye which searcheth its deepest secret, and bow before him in whose sight the heavens are not clean; and yet here under the shield of his accepted Redeemer he loves to abide, and joyfully worships in the very holy of holies. With all his holiness and dread authority, the penitent soul has now learned also his Fatherly compassion and grace, and is not afraid to stand before him.

These emotions of filial reverence and love in communion with God can be realized by us sinners, only as we stand reconciled and accepted in the merits of our Mediator, but they do come in the hallowed hours of our intimate communion with our heavenly Father, and they are the most sublimely elevating and soul-satisfying emotions the immortal mind can experience. The soul of man never rises to the height of its dignity and bliss, till it can stand thus in glad and intimate communion with God. Not in seeking and giving human happiness, not even in praising Christ for his pity to man, do we attain our highest elevation; but worshiping delighted amid all this majesty and glory, and led here by the hand of our accepted Redeemer, precisely in this is the fullness of the Christian life brought out. These adoring frames of mind, and humble and sweet communings in his love and grace, sometimes vouchsafed to pious saints on earth, give to them the richest foretaste of the blessedness they are to inherit, when they shall dwell with God in the highest heaven.

Most surely, as they stand here in glad communion with the Father, and with their hand in the hand of the Son as mediator

they will love and thank the Saviour as deeply as when dwelling upon his compassion and sympathy for lost men. They will lose nothing of their tenderness and gratitude towards Jesus Christ, only they do not here look so exclusively upon the human side of his mediation. They are far more adequately taking into view the great work of redemption, and contemplating it much as Jesus did when he undertook and finished it. Not man only, nor man most, in his wretchedness and ruin, but God in his authority and majesty, God in his holiness and purity, so bright that all else pales and fades beneath it; and yet God, this awful God, made ours by his own plan of redemption, which Jesus has executed. The dreadful majesty has become not merely tolerable to us, so that we can look upon the glory and live, but it has become most intensely delightful to us, so that with the seraphim we burn with love while we adore. No where else is the glory so awful, and hence no where else is Christ so needful; nothing so elevates man, and hence nothing so magnifies the Saviour's worth as this communion of the reclaimed sinner with the forgiving Father, through the atoning Redeemer. Here will be kindness to man, and thanks to Christ for man's sake, but beyond all this the glories of the Godhead appear. Mercy rejoices against judgment, while yet justice and judgment continue to be "the habitation of his throne." God remains just, while he yet justifies the believer. The fullness of the Father's heart in its justice and its mercy stands disclosed, and in the lasting communion our souls are "filled with all the fullness of God."

When all the tribes of men on earth shall have been thus converted, and confess Christ "*to the glory of God the Father,*" then will the gospel idea of the world's salvation be attained in its consummated reality. The great voices in heaven will then say, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." Henceforth the redeemed will sing the eternal anthem, "*Alleluia to God and the Lamb.*"

In closing, we will directly apply the conclusion now attained to our great missionary work.

Comprehensively, this work is, "to preach the gospel to every creature." The completeness of the idea is in bringing back all these aliens to near communion with God. Heathen society is everywhere wretched in its unkindness. Selfishness reigns unbroken; they "live in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." But the Pagan nations are still more miserable, in that they are "without God, and have no hope in the world." They have no conception of a Deity with whom it may be possible that man should hold joyful communion. Their gods are capricious and fickle, lavishing gifts in their fondness upon their

favorites, which stimulates them to only a selfish and mercenary devotion, and wreaking vengeance in their wrath in such a bloody way as only to excite horror and hatred. There is no blending of majesty and mercy, and tempering the divine character with dignity and amenity, which may at once inspire reverence and love. The god and the man cannot meet peacefully together. The god will despise the man, and the man will condemn the god. No pagan devotee ever worships a Deity in whom he sees "mercy and truth meeting together, and righteousness and peace embracing each other."

But what paganism never apprehends, the bible everywhere discloses. In the Christian economy, justice and grace ever meet and support each other. Authority is sustained, while benignity prevails. With all his terrible majesty on the smoking mountain, amid the thunderings and lightning, still the divine Lawgiver proclaims himself "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious." At the awful day of the last judgment, when he comes in clouds, with all his holy angels, there is still the softening of the scene in the expiatory mark of the spear; and we look on him "whom they have pierced." The mixed majesty and mercy perpetually strike the sinner's attention, and win him to intimate and joyous communion. The human heart is here hit by the flash of combined severity and tenderness, as was denying Peter by the look of his Master, and in heathen and Christian lands alike, penitence goes away alone and weeps bitterly.

Philosophy analyzes and accurately discriminates the elements in these Christian experiences, but the practical metaphysician takes the facts which are the fruit of the speculation, and simply and directly uses them to bring back lost humanity into communion with propitiated Deity. There must be apprehended the severity tempered by placability. The sinner is not made alive by the gospel, till first he has been slain by the law. Compassion will not effectually "persuade men," except as they also "know the terrors of the Lord."

Wherever this rational, as truly as evangelical, way of return to God is kept in obscurity or held in incompleteness, there will be, on any portion of the great field of benevolent labor, pagan or Christian, a large amount of religious effort utterly wasted. Much of that which is called powerful preaching, revival preaching, ardent missionary zeal, very soon exhausts all its efficiency. When the appeals are to the hope of human happiness mainly, or fear of coming misery, melting exhibitions of Jesus's sympathy with suffering humanity, there may be a quick interest excited, the freshness and force of which soon passes off, and the themes become idle and empty as the tales of the nursery; even the sacred story of the Saviour's dying love may be told with such an application, that the power of the cross shall be made weak-

ness. When put in the light merely of relief from wretchedness, or attainment of happiness, whether here or hereafter, the great transactions of calvary will quickly wear out as motives to action. To him who closely reads human nature, there will be no mystery, under such influence, that so much apparent "goodness is as the morning cloud and the early dew." He will not wonder that the sensational preachers and sentimental hearers so soon get tired of each other.

But on the other hand, that kind of dealing with fallen man, in any clime, which takes him into the presence of the heart-searching God, and obliges him to see the necessity of meeting and gaining preparation for communing with him; such preaching and dealing with the sinner never loses its power. It penetrates to the deepest fountains of the soul, and such motives never wear out. To these appeals the ear of saint and sinner ever opens, and the convicted man is forced to cry out, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" We shall make the most Christians, at home and abroad, we shall make the best Christians, when we constrain the most directly to the enquiry, "How shall I appear before God?" and when we bring the soul at length into the most intimate communion with God.

The nations of the earth wait for the day of universal peace, and all the families of mankind need to be brought together in love and kindness. Commercial intercourse will not effect this. Literature, philosophy, political diplomacy, will never kindle and diffuse Christian philanthropy. The love of Christ shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and which brings into love and communion with God, will alone bring men truly to love one another. The greater contains the less, and communion with God holds within it also fellowship with man. We are to value communion with God not as the means to get the further end that man should be kind to man, but because godly communion is itself the highest grace in its own excellency, and includes and sustains within itself love to man and all lower graces. It is the great end of Christian conversion itself, and the consummation of the Christian life, that the sinning soul has been brought to dwell in peace with God. We shall have finished our missionary work, and prepared the heathen for all other good, and brought humanity to its highest excellency, when we shall have brought the feeling of the Psalmist to be universal, "My soul longeth, and even fainteth for the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

And now, brethren, this same thing, so important for the heathen world, is equally important for us in laboring for their sal-

vation. As co-workers with God for a dying world, our first need is, that we come close to him, and keep in habitual communion with him. We shall so "be changed into his image from glory to glory," and our love and devotion to him will grow deeper and purer from year to year. This communion with the Father will be through the Son, but in the mediation of the Son we shall read the very heart of the Father. All that the Son suffered and does for a lost world is but fulfilling the plan and executing the will of the Father. Distinction of office and execution in the redemption-work makes no distinction in design and disposition. "Here the whole Deity is known;" the justice and the grace have equal glory; and the justice and the grace have no distribution in property or degree among the persons of the Godhead. Our communion here is with God in his unity, and the fellowship is *equally* with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Ghost. In giving our hearts to God, we receive in return a Father's embrace, an elder Brother's welcome, and the in-dwelling Spirit of perpetual consolation.

Here, too, we get our true and deep sympathy for the heathen. We shall pity their personal debasement, their social degradation, and most of all shall we pity their alienation from God. All other woes are as nothing compared with the absolute desolation of living without God. The same impulse will then move us towards them as that which sent the Saviour to our lost world. "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O my God; I delight to do thy will." Communion in God's will is our best preparation for all missionary service. Nothing else can make us so strong to carry help to the lost nations and tribes of men. When discouragements and disasters and delays press upon us, nothing else can keep us so hopeful, so enduring, so persevering. Amid all sorts of hindrances, this will make us patient, courageous, and at length triumphant. In every difficulty and trial we have but to say,

"Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee,"

and we shall go on refreshed and unfaltering. Near to God ourselves, we shall not fail nor grow weary in bringing others to Him. We shall expect and choose not to rest till we reach the heavenly communion.

Out of this fallen world, God has revealed to us that he will gather a redeemed world of his own. "He will purify to himself a peculiar people." In all ages he has had a seed to serve him, and the promised age is coming "when all shall know the Lord." Our part, brethren, in the good work will soon cease. But all are one in Christ Jesus, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," and those who go up to their communion with God face to face, will have their places here filled

with other workers, growing more numerous, more zealous, more successful. The spiritual temple shall gather its living stones from every land, and grow up to its finished consummation. The voices of all the holy in heaven and earth shall shout the top-stone to its place, crying, "Grace, grace, unto it." "Every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

SERMON XXXI.*

BY REV. RICHARD S. STORRS, JR., D. D.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE PILGRIMS, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.

THE BIBLE, A BOOK FOR MANKIND.

"Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language."—ACTS II. 6.

WE are often impressed, as we follow the narrative of the strange and mighty works of Christ, with the resemblance—may I not say, with the inward analogy—between the physical miracles which he wrought, and the more transcendent effects accomplished by him upon the minds and wills of men; effects which are still repeated in their experience wherever through the Gospel the Spirit, who represents the Lord, exerts his power.

When he poured light on eyes that had been sightless, he seems to have but typified therein the spiritual illumination that he equally gave to the souls which believed him, and which through that belief were brought to a wholly new conception of God, of Duty, and of the Hereafter. When he wakened in the ear whose nerve had been dead, a new sensibility to the harmonies around it, what did he but prefigure his more sublime office of making the soul behind that ear quickly sensitive to the voices of God, in the Scripture, in Providence, in his instructions, and in its own conscience. And when he loosened the cramped muscle, and bade the lame walk freely forth, or when he caused the leprosy to drop as a tainted garment from him on whom its scales were fastened,—yea, when he lifted the

* This discourse was preached in the Course of the Half-Century Sermons of the American Bible Society, and is printed here by permission from the Bible House.

dead to life, and made the blood again to course through veins that had been fast dissolving,—still did these amazing effects run parallel always with those of the deeper spiritual freedom, the more profound inward cleansing, the new life developed amid moral death, which he imparted, and still imparts, to those who invoke and trust his power. His control over the winds reminds us of that which he yet exerts over the furious human passions. The power of speech which he gave to the dumb, is paralleled yet surpassed by the new song which now he puts into lips that were silent about him. And in even the curse, beneath which the fig-tree withered to its roots, we see foreshown the blight which he to-day incurs who by profession, without Christian action, reproduces the leaves that promised fruit but held it not.

So everywhere the moral is prophesied by the physical in the works which Christ wrought; and by his operations on the bodies of men we are naturally thrown forward to a distinct contemplation of those which equally were accomplished by him in the unseen sphere of the mind and the will.

It seems to me that without either a violent wresting or an unwarrantable stretch of this general principle, we may discern in the signal miracle to which our attention is called in the text a type of one more wholly intellectual and moral in its nature; the influence of which surrounds us still, and the fruits of which shall not cease to be enjoyed, while the Bible continues to be studied by men. The spirit of God, descending at the Pentecost, enabled those on whom came his influence to speak before those who were gathered around them in the tongue which to each was familiar and native; so that Parthians, Medes, and Elamites alike, the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, the strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, all heard them speak in their own tongues the wonderful works of God.

The immediate miracle was amazing. The physical effect was wholly without precedent. And we wonder not that they were awed, and intensely excited, whose very senses were startled by it. But is it not paralleled, while transcended, by that still greater operation of the Spirit through which the writers who made the Bible, under his inspiration, were moved, without purpose or concert on their part, so to construct it that it addresses every people, every person, through that precise mode of appeal, which to each is most intelligible, most impressive? To render it from its original tongues into the various articulate languages spoken by the nations, this is a work for skilful and reverent human hands. To so prepare it that the generic modes of address, through which its moral truths are uttered, should be appropriate and effective to each, was a work for Divine wisdom and

power; a work beside which the wonder of the tongues, amazing as it is, is not the most august and high.

And so, by this passage, rising from one plane of thought to another, we are naturally led to the special theme of this discourse: **THE BIBLE, CONSIDERED AS A BOOK FOR MANKIND**; a Book adapted to reach and to interest all among men, in spite of the vast varieties which appear in their character, culture, and moral condition, as well as in their exterior state. The theme is a large one, and is certainly suitable to this series of sermons; and to it I ask your thoughtful attention.

It would seem at first sight, antecedently to experience, a hopeless attempt to try to make a single book that should be equally suitable and effective for the instruction of all Mankind, while such measureless diversities exist among men; while not individuals only, but peoples, are separated by immense and radical differences. No book ever written by human hands, and inspired and moulded by the unassisted human brain, has ever approached the accomplishment of the task. No man, however gifted with genius, however largely informed and cultured, however practised in intellectual effort, could possibly propose such a work to himself without an instant and utter sense of his inability to perform it. The very attempt would argue in him an insanity of pride, or a mental unsoundness. The poetry of Dante, de Vega, Milton, of Homer, Æschylus, or of Shakspeare himself, the most universal of human minds;—the philosophical, ethical, political treatises, the scientific essays, or the collected orations, of the great masters of reason and of speech,—the fascinating public or personal narratives, which have sought to set forth the general laws or the deepest facts of human experience,—table-talks, romances, allegories, songs;—all alike have appealed to classes, or to particular peoples, and have gained but a limited audience in the world. Though the names of their authors, like that of Lope, have been turned into adjectives by a national enthusiasm, and taken to represent the ideal of perfection, they have never commanded universal attention. To some, they have been precious. To others, devoid of interest and charm. Translate them into foreign tongues, distribute them everywhere over Christendom, and still in every nation alike are those who welcome and admire, and those whom they wholly fail to reach; who are as utterly unimpressed by them as is the pavement by the moonbeams that fall on it; as is the tree by the serenade sung beneath its branches.

Men of the largest and most sympathetic intellectual powers have felt this keenly; the more keenly, indeed, as their sense of the importance of the truth they were uttering was more intense; and have wished—but with a vain aspiration—that they could at least touch all their contemporaries with one impres-

sion, by some sublime and luminous discourse, or some supreme soul-stirring poem. But they have only in the rarest instances been able in any considerable degree to accomplish even this; and when they have spoken to mankind at large, in other lands and other times as well as their own, they have had to return to classes or to persons, standing near their own level, as the only audience possible for them. Not unfrequently, even then, their subsequent readers have been tempted to apply to them the impatient remark which Humbolt in his *Cosmos* quotes from Goethe, concerning the eminent German naturalists, that 'their art had been to make their science inaccessible.'

But now the aim which is distinctly proposed in the construction of the Bible is to make a book to be equally adapted to every class, of every people, in every land, and in each age, and on whatever possible level of character and capacity; a book that shall have for each of all an appropriate voice, and one which only a moral reluctance, not any peculiarity of power or training, shall hinder him from hearing.

It was not a matter of choice, even—we may reverently say—with the Divine author of the Scriptures, whether this should be his aim in them or not. Granting that man, aside from Revelation, does not know, and will not learn, all that it is important that he should know, concerning himself and his responsibilities, concerning God and His moral Government, concerning the Future whose shadow falls beforehand upon us, but into whose depths no eye can pierce till death unseals it,—granting this, as it would seem impossible that any one should not who has surveyed the condition of Heathendom as it was before Christ, as it now is wherever his Gospel has not gone,—it becomes at least probable that God, if wise and good, will recognize and supply this urgent want. It is all the more probable, as the conception which we form of him becomes more just, and as the importance to the welfare of men of the truths to be declared impresses us more. It comes not unfrequently to be in thoughtful heathen minds a deep conviction, that God—if there be a God, personal and good—will sometime or other tell men what to believe and to do; making evident and certain, by a special revelation, the truths which they consciously need to know. It was the feeling of the necessity of this which led Porphyry to compile his ambitious Collection of Ancient Oracles. He hoped so to meet this demand of his age as to leave Christianity less attractive. It is the intense desire for this which gives their interest to those passages that have been quoted by Neander from the semi-religious romance of The Clementines.

And now, if God shall make a Revelation, such as this desire in man points toward, it must, it would seem, be equally granted that he *may* do this, and wisely do it, through PERMANENT

WRITINGS; that it is at least as probable that he will do it in this precise mode as in any other other; as through an endless succession, for example, of inspired teachers; or through a tradition, continually transmitted. Indeed, the latter of these, without the former, would appear the most untrustworthy mode of making any revelation. What is spoken is easily forgotten. Only what is written remains. Oral instructions may be first misinterpreted, and then, as thus circulated, though originally true, may be made to teach positive error; as when, for a very decisive example, the words of the Lord to his elected Apostle Peter, "If I will that he [John] tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" were misunderstood by the disciples who heard them, and the saying spread, and evidently long remained among them, that the Lord had promised that John should not die; a thing which, in fact, he had not intimated.

But a written declaration is scarcely liable to such misconception. It continues as at first, can be carefully examined, compared with others, put under various lights of illustration, till the meaning of it is exactly ascertained. A volume, composed of such written declarations, will be open always to individual fruitful study. The only condition which it will require from those into whose hands it comes—the only condition to their intellectual mastery of it—will be the attainment by some among them of that prime art of reading which the child in the school earliest acquires, and which opens to the student all the thought of the world. It will stimulate, at the same time, independent inquiries, and prompt to a vast variety of research. It will become the vital condition of a rich and generous auxiliary literature; will contribute thus, indirectly as well as directly, to the general mental advancement of a people. It will be capable of the widest distribution. And by the many sides and fronts which it certainly will offer to sceptical objections, it will in the end, if it endure these, be demonstrated true by such various evidences that their final force will become irresistible.

It must therefore be admitted as possible, perhaps as probable, by even the skeptic, that God, if he makes a revelation at all of the truths which men need to know, and of the duties which they ought to perform, will make it through such Sacred Writings; not by an order, constantly renewed, of inspired men,—who must be of an incalculable number to reach all parts and classes of the race, and whose teaching would be likely in the end to enfeeble, rather than inspire, the minds that were trained to depend upon them; not by traditions, transmitted through the memory of successive generations, and liable always to be changed and perverted, if not to be lost; but in WRITINGS, which shall preserve their identity, and shall at last be combined in a Book for the free, frequent, and reverent study of all who choose.

This is probable. And this it is—precisely this—which the faith of the Christians associated for the work that convenes us this evening affirms to have been accomplished in the Book which we call by the name that has come as a precious legacy to Christendom from the age of Chrysostom and of Jerome—the name **THE BIBLE**.

But now if such a Book be selected as the vehicle of God's revelation of truth, it seems, as I suggested, hardly to be left a matter of choice whether it shall or shall not be adapted to reach and to interest all men alike, and to speak the truth which it conveys, to every class and every person, through that particular form of appeal which to each is most suitable. It cannot confine itself to a part of the race, and speak to the few rather than the many, to the thoughtful and cultivated and not the uneducated, and still be in harmony with the goodness, the wisdom, the love of God; with his design, even, in giving it to the world. To illustrate his perfections, to accomplish his ends, it must be adapted to all alike; to the most illiterate, as well as to the cultivated; to the vicious and profane, even, as well as the devout. It must have a voice equally apt, and equally audible, to those who dwell in Mesopotamia, as to those in Judea; to Egyptian and Cyrenian, as well as to Roman; to Cretes and Arabians, as well as to Jews. If it does not, there will always be multitudes in the world shut out from its influence, or who only can take that at second hand, and be dependent on others for it. And this would seem to indicate certainly that God had a special favor for classes, and was not—as it is his glory to be—the impartial All-Father.

We should as soon expect a sun which was naturally fitted to enlighten and warm only certain streets and squares in the city, only special favored portions of the earth, and limited parallels on the sea, as expect a Bible, coming from God, to be but partial in its fitness to the race. If the book that purports to be his word is not fitted to reach in its appeal from one extreme of that race to the other, and to reach, at the same time, all intermediate strata of society,—to make the truths which it declares as familiarly at home in the Bushman's kraal as in the closets of studious piety, in the jungle or the slave-cabin as in the halls of ancient universities, it will want one needed evidence of its origin in his mind. Miracles themselves could hardly, I think, hold closely or long to such a book our intelligent conviction.

Let us then look, from this point of view, on the peculiar construction of the Bible, noticing briefly the parts that are contained in it, and the relation and proportion of these parts.

Perhaps the first thing which impresses us in examining this, is the comparatively large space which is occupied in it with plain and graphic historical narratives; narratives that seem at

first sight, possibly, out of place, at least to be carried to disproportionate extent, in a book intended to teach men of God rather than of man; to apply to the present, not illustrate the past; and to exhibit general truths, and great and instant moral duties, rather than to perpetuate ancient records.

These narratives, too, seem disproportioned among themselves, in their fullness and extent, and hardly to correspond, in respect of these, with the importance of the events which they record. A few pages are occupied with the story of the creation; a few more with a rapid general sketch of the state of the world before the flood. And then come many pages and books occupied at first with the history of one family, and then of the tribes which later spring from it; and finally of the people, into which the descendants and remnants of these tribes are gradually combined. Only here and there, as it were incidentally, are notices recorded of the state of the greater and more opulent nations which existed around this people of the Jews, which carried on wars, developed statesmanships, cultivated arts, erected capitals, founded empires, beside which theirs were insignificant. But attention is constantly called to the progress, the reactions, the divisions and catastrophes, and the successive conditions, of the limited and obscure Hebrew people, of which the thought of the world at the time took little notice, and toward which its power was only exerted to subdue and despoil it.

The most trifling things, too, are in this curious compilation of narratives related often with more particularity, and impressed with more emphasis, than are those which are greater. We are told—with what seems to some, no doubt, a tedious minuteness—the details of the construction of the skin-covered tent in which this semi-barbarous people worshipped their God; but only two or three sentences are given to the wondrous pillar, of cloud by day and of fire by night, which is declared to have marched before them as they went out from bondage toward their Future. We are told particularly of the stations at which they tarried in the wilderness, as they wearily crossed it—stations which now, for the most part, it is as impossible precisely to fix as to tell what parts of the waters of our rivers were then contained in the currents of the Jordan. But only by a word or two, here and there, is indicated to us, without description, the foundation of these cities, like Tadmor in the desert, and Tiphshah on the distant Euphrates, which Solomon built, that he might open to the commerce of his nation the vast resources of Central Asia.

The great things and the small are thus not only intermixed, but the small—or what seem such—are often treated with an ampler completeness than is given to the greater, about which we should be eager for instruction. No connected narrative is given of the long captivity of the Hebrews in Assyria, or of the effects

produced upon them by the splendid but tyrannous Heathen civilization which there they encountered. But one entire book is occupied with the story of a young Moabitish widow, a story related with exquisite beauty, but seeming to have, at first sight at least, but a quite remote bearing on the general record ; while another, which does not contain within it the name of God, reports the startling and perilous adventures through which a Jewish woman passed in her efforts to serve the cause of her people at the court of a dissolute Persian king.

A similar apparent want of proportion marks equally the laws, or codes of law, which the Bible presents. The Ten Commandments, which even skeptics admit to be of importance, if not to be of vital consequence and a secular authority, are contained in a single brief passage from one of the books ; and the essential principle of them is still further compressed into the requirement of love alike toward God and man. But page after page is successively occupied with rules which concern the exterior of life ; what they to whom they were given should eat ; what kinds of animals they should offer in sacrifice ; and with what exact details of ceremony they should approach their altar and shrine.

Personal biographies, too, are everywhere interspersed ; not methodically given, but hinted sometimes, sometimes outlined with rapid touches, and occasionally filled up with more completeness. They are not biographies of good men alone, but of proud, corrupt, and mean men as well ; and the career of the vicious and the profligate is sometimes presented with more distinctness than that of the devout. We can clearly trace the treacherous and murderous course of Abimelech, the son of Gideon ; but we hear not a word of his half-brother Jotham, one of the most engaging figures in all the Old Testament, except through his remarkable parable, spoken to the Shechemites, of the trees assembled for the choice of a king. Ahab is as plainly before our eyes as is the later Roman Commodus, in secular annals ; and the brilliant Jezebel, who moved and moulded him, imperious, cruel, but queenly even in her crimes, is almost as much to us a historical presence as is Mary of England, or Catharine de Medici. But of the daughter of Pharaoh, by whom Moses was rescued, how little are we told ! She vanishes from our eyes with the one humane action. And of such a majestic teacher as Ezekiel, the visioned prophet, whose mission to the nation was in one of the grandest crises of its history, we know almost nothing, as to the facts of his personal experience, except from his allusion to the circumstance that he had been married, and had sadly and suddenly lost his wife.

So the biographical sketches which meet us throughout the Old Testament seem, to the eye that looks only on the surface,

like a collection of ancient statues, dug up from the earth in which they have been buried; yellow with time; some without one member, some without another; an arm here, and there a limb, here only a hand, and there a torso; the most beautiful often the most fatally mutilated, and the exquisite form without a head.

Nor yet has the complex structure of the Scriptures—even regarding the Old Testament alone—been more than partially set before us. Associated with these more general narratives, these records of laws, and these sketches of personal adventure and character, are songs and odes; some evidently composed for public use, and some wholly individual in their character, written by those who could not help it; some full of anguish, fear, remorse, the keenest sense of personal bereavement, the deepest despondency in view of God's justice and of man's lost estate; and some as full of love, gratitude, praise, courage, the most exultant adoration of God's mercy, the most triumphant expectation of his favor. One chants in sombre majesty the funeral strains inspired by the sense of the briefness of life, and the next contrasts it with pean notes, awakened by the thought of his security who dwelleth beneath the Almighty's wing. There are hymns that chant, with lyric sweetness, the wonderful dealings of Jehovah with his people; and hymns that have been pressed from souls burdened and pierced by sharpest sorrow, in the memory of great crimes. There are odes which are full of imprecations of vengeance on the enemies of God; and others which express, with pathetic earnestness, what looks like an almost cowardly longing for relief from endurance, and rest from work. And one whole book is occupied by what appears upon the surface a mere oriental epithalamium, composed to celebrate the bridal of a king.

There are collections, too, of general philosophical and ethical maxims, the compressed wisdom of large experience, put into sentences terse and compact, and perhaps rounded and smoothed by use, to be fitted to circulate as popular proverbs. And one book contains a vivid exhibition of the partial and erroneous way in which men reason concerning Providence, though they start with a conception of one governing God, if they have not the light of revelation to guide them; while another contains a striking development of that epicurean and godless philosophy which says there is nothing better for a man than to gain what he can, and enjoy what he may, and expect his existence to end at death.

And, still additional to all these elements, there are comprised in these same Scriptures prophetic admonitions; startling sermons, full of instruction, exhortation, entreaty; predictions of the future, couched usually in figurative language, and sometimes

strangely veiled while adorned by symbols that are equally brilliant and mysterious. And there are records of the effects which these produced on those who heard them; in some cases, even, of the subsequent events in which they were fulfilled.

All this in the Old Testament. Passing on, then, to the New, we find there, at first, four extended and careful narratives—each different from the others, while still essentially harmonious with them—concerning the birth, life, character, work, and the entire experience on earth, of Him whose figure is central in the Bible, and who towers supremely over all that surround him in its immense biographical galleries. His conversations are reported; his prayers, and promises; his miraculous actions; his caresses and his tears; where he walked, and with whom he dined; his words of sympathy and of rebuke; the parables which he made the chariots of pearl for the thoughts which he sent on their world-wide career; the experiences of weakness and want which he knew; the humiliations to which he was subjected; the strange splendors which now and then invested him; the agony beneath which his very soul bowed; the amazing resurrection with which at last he burst the gates of death and the grave, and the luminous glory in which he finally left the earth.

One of these narratives seems to have been written especially for the Hebrews, converted to Christ; another, perhaps, for the Roman world; another for the Greek; and another, the latest in its order, for all the scattered disciples of the Lord—to supplement the others, and to give a fuller exhibition of his character, a fuller report of his instructions, with less comparatively of his outward action.

Then comes a brief and summary account, simple in plan, but most instructive and fertile in suggestion, of the early missionary development in the world, after the departure of the Lord from it, and after that descent of the Spirit to which the text has called our attention. And this is followed by a collection of letters, written at different places and times, and under a great variety of circumstances, by a number of men, who were separated from each other in many points of character and of culture, as well as of training and original power, while agreed in their views of Christian truth, and of the duty which it enjoined; and who wrote freely of theological, ethical, or practically Christian and benevolent subjects, as these successively engaged their thoughts. Many particulars of personal experience, and many traits of personal character, appear in these letters; while, at the same time, the substance of them is a broad and masterly exhibition of doctrine, as they in common held and taught it. And the long series at last is crowned with the most mysterious and sublime book which the entire volume contains; full of poetry, full of piety, full of a rich and unsearchable symbolism, which never

yet has been wholly interpreted, though in it the mind of the church from the first has believed lay hid a description of the progress of the Christian religion from its feeble beginnings to its final complete supremacy in the earth.

So many, so diverse, so singularly contrasted with each other, are the various kinds of composition represented in the Bible; while the moment we attempt to analyze each, and to trace the subordinate varieties that exist between the individual writers or speakers, we are lost in the manifold intricate paths of such an inquiry. Many authors have contributed to produce it. Various languages are represented in it—in either its vocabulary, or its forms of grammatical construction. The same author writes in a different style at one time in his life from that which he employs at another; while the first of them all is separated from the last by an interval of time certainly greater than that which separates us this evening from the first arrival of the Saxons in Britain, or separates the modern civilized Europe from the age of the savage Visigoth conquests.

So confused, fragmentary, heterogeneous, appears at first sight the construction of the Bible, that one wonders not that skeptics have always attacked and derided it, as wanting in system, symmetry, proportion,—not fitted to hold, like a treatise, or a poem, or a continuous and harmonious history, the rewarded attention of scholarly minds. It may even seem to those not skeptics, but who survey it only from without, and measure it by the customary standards of criticism, that the Spirit of God, who of old brought the cosmos out of the chaos, has here reversed his operation, and has thrown the truth into forms of expression pervaded by no unity, stitched together by the binder, but combined in no really organic whole, and contributing harmoniously to no precise final impression.

But now there are many points of view from which this very construction of the Scriptures, as distinguished from every other possible, approves itself desirable, and vindicates the wisdom of God in selecting it. When we recognize, for instance, the real unity of thought—the positive substantial identity, indeed, of doctrine and of precept—which prevails through these dissimilar books, written by different men not only, but in different languages, in various lands, and in ages widely remote from each other,—when we observe how perfectly John, and Paul, and Peter, separately writing in the age of Pliny, almost in that of Tacitus and of Plutarch, are in harmony; after so many centuries, not only with Isaiah the evangelical prophet, but with David before him, and even with Moses taking up his mission on the banks of the Nile, or uttering his predictions from the borders of Moab—in harmony, even, with those still earlier prophetic declarations of which Moses himself has only given us the sub-

sequent record,—it seems absolutely impossible to doubt that one supreme controlling mind, seeing the end from the beginning, has presided invisibly above all these ; and that their unity, amid all their varieties, has come directly from His as its source.

Nothing like it is found elsewhere in history. Disciples have contradicted their teachers. Men, first confederated by a common belief, have broken afterward into furious oppositions ; and their celebrated schools have been split by divisions, and splintered into hostile fractions. Succeeding thinkers, like the builders of palaces, have seemed to feel it incumbent upon them to erase the foundations of previous systems to make an ampler space for their own. And a series of doctrines progressively developed through many centuries, without divergence from the original love of direction, is a phenomenon nowhere presented. In this unity of the Scriptures, then, amid all their variety, is demonstrated to us the hand of God. Miracles themselves—not merely recorded, but instantly wrought before our eyes—could be hardly a more illustrious proof of it.

But observe, still further, how this peculiar construction of the Bible serves always anew to irritate the mind of one who examines it to new acts of attention ; how it tasks the memory ; how it disciplines the judgment ; how it compels an earnest, repeated, continuous study, in the comparison of one part with another, and in the more careful analysis of each, to find exactly all its contents, and detect its harmony with what seems to contradict it. Observe what greater fullness of exhibition is given to the truth, when even the evil, as well as the good, are made, by their example if not by their instructions, to set it forth, and the four narratives, where there might have been but one, become—to accept the image of the Fathers—as the four rivers of Paradise, multiplying their currents to refresh with their waters the widest regions.

Observe how a book composed as this is, and urging such claims on men's attention, awakens, stimulates, necessitates research, in the greatest possible variety of directions, and challenges the entire mind of Christendom to enter on any of the lines of investigation, of which it purposely crosses so many, that it may, if true, be demonstrated to be so, or if untrue, be exposed. Observe of what immensaest proof the entire book becomes thus susceptible, as these simultaneous or successive explorations, amid manuscripts, monuments, languages, traditions, still shed each one new light upon it, or bring stones for its buttresses and capitals for its columns. Observe how an essential, or a serious error, in the transcription of the copies of the Bible, or in their translation, becomes nearly impossible, through this peculiar construction of it ; since the diverse parts of it can hardly equally be erroneously copied or erroneously translated, and the

discovery of any collision between these parts will at once direct to a more intent scrutiny of each in its turn. Observe how like the Bible becomes, through this its mode of composition, to the Earth itself,—which is not trimly laid out and garnished, smoothed into house-lots, or parcelled into farms, but is presented to us in the rough ; rich, but rugged ; apparently without any orderly arrangement ; its mountains waiting to be subdued, its rivers waiting to be utilized ; the precious metals hid beneath rocks, and the glittering jewels lodged in caverns ; but which thus, and thus only, incites men to the enterprise through which they gain final mastery of it, and becomes the fresh matrix to each generation of intelligent thought and of voluntary force. Observe all these things, and we need not look further to find reason enough for this peculiar construction of the Bible.

But still, beyond and above all these, we must recognize the fact that through this singular manifoldness of structure, that Bible is prepared for **UNIVERSAL DISTRIBUTION** ; is gifted with a voice especially adapted to every people ; is made a volume equally apt and equally impressive for the shepherd and the scholar, for Scythian and Barbarian, Greek and Jew ; for the cannibal, and the morally cultured ; for the rudest and grossest, as well as the most intellectual and refined. We must recognize this, before the whole wisdom of its arrangement becomes evident to us ; before the really unique glory of the Book impresses us as it ought.

What no other volume on earth has accomplished, or has ever hopefully sought to accomplish, that the Bible does accomplish, by reason of this its special structure. It utters the infinite truths which it brings, and the maxims of duty which mark it Divine, in the form which each people, and each fragment of a people, must accept as its mental vernacular ; and so the address which it makes to each is that which is most suitable, not only, which is alone suitable and sufficient. It is *this* which we ought most gratefully to recognize in the structure of the Bible, and by which we should be quickened always to new efforts to spread it.

Take that great portion of mankind, for example, which still remains in the Barbarous state, and consider what is the mental condition of those whom civilization has not reached, or has reached only to degrade them,—in Africa, in Asia, in the wilderness regions of our own country, in the islands of the Pacific, in the almost continental Australia. You know what it is. Sluggish, cruel, crafty, lustful, immersed in vice, surrounded not only but pervaded by hereditary heathenism, incapable apparently of intellectual or of moral impressions, craving only immediate indulgence for appetite and passion, and with but that general sense of God, as an unseen power to be propitiated, which is

shown in the fear of the idol or the fetish ; without any knowledge whatever of the future ; without hope or aspiration for mental or for social advancement in the present ;—so the Barbarian stands before us, throughout the world ; and the problem how to reach him with spiritual lessons, seems certainly at the outset, incapable of solution. Only God has found a way to do it.

You read to him the philosophical treatise ; you recite before him the tuneful poem ; you address him with admirable ethical maxims, put into his own forms of language, and try to commend their beauty to his conscience, and to make his mind take in the new treasure ;—and you might as well read, recite, proclaim these to the ape that grins and jumps in the trees ; almost to the tiger that crouches in the jungle, or the crocodile showing his bullet-proof scales among the reeds. You bring to him the very truths of the Bible, the doctrine of God, and the tidings of a Future, and the blessed news of redemption through Christ ; you bring these to him, through sermons such as are wont to gratify and quicken your answering thoughts, and to make your whole heart glow with feeling ; through treatises, such as adorn and enrich our Christian literature ; through even poems like Milton's, hymns like Cowper's, or an allegory like Bunyan's,—and you might as well read them to the birds of the wood, or the serpent stealing through the grass, or the fishes outside the coral-reef. He is not reached by them ; does not understand them ; is no more roused, held, governed, by their too delicate intellectual handling, than would be the iron lodged under the rock by the lancet of the surgeon or the pen of the author, if these were applied to pry out and break it.

But tell him of a God who thunders in battle, a God who turns the rivers into flood, and sends a fire that runs along the ground, and heaps up the seas around his children, that they may cross the stream dry-shod ; a God who holds the sun still at his will, and under whose touch the solid mountain flames and throbs ;—be no more afraid of anthropomorphic exhibitions of God than are the sacred writers themselves, but make the Barbarian understand that God hates sin, and will visit the vengeance of tremendous retribution on those who resist him,—yea, take away your whole subordinate and dainty apparatus, and bring him face to face with the Bible ; let Moses come to him, as he came of old from Sinai to the Israelites, his face shining from the splendors he had seen, and his lips awful with the utterance of law ; let Joshua speak to him, or Gideon, or Deborah, or Elijah from Carmel ; let the form of Samuel rise before him, as before the seared eyeballs of Saul ; let the fiery furnace open its doors to him, that he may see walking therein, unharmed of the flames, those who believed and honored God ; let at last the future con-

trusted gates of fire and pearl rise on each hand before his thoughts, and the vast white throne before which he shall stand for judgment shed its appalling splendors on him,—and he is reached, grasped, conquered, unimpressible as he is, he is conquered by the truth.

The visions and symbols which to you are subordinate, grasp his attention, pierce his sensibility, with their far-shining and cutting rays, till they let in the light of God upon him. The miracles, at which a skeptical science is so annoyed, as if the harmonies of creation were disturbed by them, and its order interrupted, become the picks, wedges, and sledges, the mighty drills, the tremendous trip-hammers, by which the iron is broken within him. The startling, abrupt, half-finished stories, which have seemed to you to want symmetry, perhaps, and a normal completeness, are to him the most vivid exhibitions of God, setting forth his invisible power and might as electricity is set forth in jagged lightnings. They frighten, confound, startle, pursue him; and when once they have got access to his mind, it is as impossible for him to forget them, or expel their impression, as for us to close the dazzled eyes, after the lightning, and not see still the blazing zigzag imaged upon the shrinking retina.

The very Barbarian is yet not idiotic. There are some germs of possibility in him, capacities of culture not entirely destroyed. There are some forms of mental appeal to which he is sensitive. Narrative is one of these; especially the brief and vivid story of what is unusual, wonderful, tragic. Or the story of trifles will often engage him, where a general historical narrative does not. Song is another form of address which has power for him; in which the passion and anguish of the soul, or its joy and triumph, have been wreaked upon expression. Eloquence is another; especially the eloquence of authority, like that of the law-giver; or of stern reproof, like that of the prophets; of daring, like that of Daniel; or of pleading entreaty, like David's before God, or like Esther's before the king. And it is precisely these, you notice, which the Bible largely presents to its readers. It is through centuries vocal with these that it constrains the rude heathen to walk, as he follows its pages. His fears are aroused by them; and to him, as to others, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. His conscience of sin is awakened to activity; and when that is awakened, a fire is lighted which only the blood of Christ can quench. His imagination is touched, which sins and shames have not destroyed. A sensibility, which has lain so dormant that its rising again seems almost to imply a new creation, is stirred within him; sensibility to desire, to hope, to moral purpose, to admiration of heroism, to sympathy with suffering, to emulation of nobleness.

And when his attention has thus been engaged, and the path

of moral progress has been entered, then the real unity of thought in the Scripture, and the inter-relation of its parts, develop their power, and push him forward. The exact details of the ritual law give him a sense, as they were designed to give to the Hebrews, of the holiness of God, by whom all particulars of life are surveyed, and before whom nothing unclean may be offered. And so he is prepared for the consummating law, when he hears it at last, in sublime spirituality, from the lips of God's Son. Interested in Jacob, he is prepared to be attracted by that Messiah to whom Jacob points. The Joshua, by whom Israel was prompted and marshalled to the conquest of Canaan, introduces him to the Jesus, of whom name and office are both prophetic. Jerusalem on earth, with its palaces and temple, points upward to the city of God on high; with every part of the temple, especially, from the carvings of cherubim overlaid with gold, to the ark, and the altar, and molten sea, symbolic of that. And out of all the seemingly complicated testimonies, wonders, narratives, biographies, laws, sermons, songs, predictions—gathering an impression inevitably from them of the Future they reveal, and of the God whom they exhibit—he is led by degrees but inevitably onward, to the covenant of faith, and the final revelation of the Lord and his Heaven.

This is according to the law of his mind; and this is the fact which a thousand times over has been shown in history. It is thus that the eyes which were utterly blind have been made to see light; that the hard have been softened, and the rough refined; that the savage chieftain has been changed to the confessor, and the murderer to a martyr. It is thus, in fact, that our own ancestors, through the Bible as heard, though not at first as read, were lifted up, step after step, from piracy, slavery, heathenish wickedness, human sacrifices, to a civilized culture, and at least a relative moral pureness. And thus was wrought in them a love for the Bible, which we should inherit, central as life, and inextinguishable. Because it had a voice for them, its spiritual truths got hold upon them. Their ears were too dull to be pierced at first by the arguments and persuasions which to us are familiar. But the thunder-claps of the Scripture prepared them for its subsequent whispers of love; and its terrible precepts made the cross more attractive. And what it had for them of old, it has to-day for all who are like them; for Mesopotamians, as well as Judeans; for Arabian and Egyptian, as well as for the proselyte. Whatever class may neglect or repulse it, the Barbarian mind must always confess in it a singular power.

But turn then to the other and greater portion of the race as we see it; to the cultured and civilized peoples of the earth. Here differences more numerous and various confront us. For it is the constant effect of education to bring out original pecu-

liarities in its subjects, of power and taste, and to nourish and unfold, and not to destroy these ; so that nations, classes, families, individuals, beneath its influence, become differenced from each other, and ever the more as their culture advances. Those in one country are not altogether like those in another ; and even those of one profession, or one mode of occupation, are often dissimilar from their equals in another. To reach these all, then, and equally move them, by the address of any one volume—it hardly would seem a more hopeless effort to make all birds fly through the air in one direction ; or to make all clouds take similar shapes, as the winds and the sun turn the waters into mist.

Yet notice how to all these peoples, and to all classes and households among them, the Bible speaks ; with the same readiness and reach in its appeal to one as to another.

Of course I cannot illustrate this in detail. It would take more hours than I have minutes, and occupy volumes instead of sentences. But present to your thoughts the peoples or the persons most naturally and sharply distinguished from each other, and, wheresoever you run the division, see what a fitness there is in the Scripture for those on either side of the line. Take, for example, the Oriental, as differenced constitutionally, perhaps, and certainly educationally, from the Occidental mind ; and remember how many portions of the Bible appeal especially to the former, with the very shimmer and gleam of the East on the picturesque pages, the very figures of the East walking beneath the royal or prophetic mantles ; so that the enterprise of translating it into Arabic is one that attracts the instant assent of all thoughtful minds, and we know that the many millions of people to whom that language is vernacular will recognize the book as one especially appropriate to them. Yet equally, on the other hand, to the Western mind are as extensive parts of the Scripture as precisely and wisely adapted ; and no lawyer, editor, statesman, savan, of Slavic, Celtic, Saxon stock can elaborate arguments, prepare narratives, conduct discussions, that shall be more in harmony with, that shall have more distinctly on them the very air of, the Occidental civilization.

Or take the different developments presented in the Masculine nature, on the one hand, and the Feminine on the other ; the coarser, solider, and more muscular faculties which are commonly marked and masterful in the one, the more delicate, sensitive, and versatile powers which are the charm and crown of the other. Remember that no other book of the world, that sought to inculcate moral truth, has been able to make itself equally dear to both the sexes, but that each has wanted some inward fitness either to one or to the other, and that those which have even approached success in this direction have been those which most nearly resembled the Bible, both in spirit and in form ;

and then remember that man and woman, alike and equally, in all the ages, in every land, in their most fine and perfect culture, their most completely distinctive development, are always attracted to the Bible, and equally nourished upon its pages. If either values it more than the other, it is certainly the woman; but this because her moral nature is more readily attuned to it. The arguments and discourses which it contains are as perfectly apt to man's more robust and resolute intellect as to her finer genius.

Or divide the race again, if you will, not between the East and the West, not by the sexes, but by the different successive stages of individual development. Take one in childhood; and how surely the unwearying stories of the Scripture allure and charm, and how deeply they impress him; how insensibly they mingle their narratives and suggestions with all his thoughts, and tinge his very nightly dreams. Take another in youth; and how the eager principle of curiosity, which then is most active, is appealed to by this wondrous and multiform book. What questions are started; what innumerable themes of thought presented; what a ceaseless mental activity is incited; how the fancy is quickened, and the young imagination kept on the alert, by the forms that only glance before it, and the stories that are purposely left unfinished; while, at the same time, the sympathies which belong to that plastic and ingenuous period of life, are sharply stirred, and noble courses toward noble ends are made as plain as yonder streets.

Or take the mature and experienced mind, in which faith keeps step with intellectual discipline, and how is it ever anew engaged, tasked, disciplined, roused, rewarded, not by the themes only, but by the special modes of presenting them, which here are familiar. Difficulties, are then the chiefest attractions. Mysterious statements put every faculty to its proof. And the athletic and masterly powers, goaded while guided, compelled to arrange into system for themselves whatever they find, seeing the horizon recede as they advance, and allured and enriched without satiety, are kept up to the level of highest activity, and find a joy in the trials by which they are enforced. Or take the aged; and how as on a quiet bed the worn and wearied soul reposes on the "Thus saith the Lord;" on the serene truths and promises which have the solid support beneath of God's declaration; on the maxims of wisdom that are simple while sublime, and on the copious discoveries of the life everlasting.

Or, with minuter division still, take among adult minds, the scientific on the one hand—who must reduce, compare, classify, and build from many scattered data a final system—and the practical on the other, who want only immediate instruction and direction, and who find in hundreds of passages in the Bible pre-

cisely what and all they need. Take the poetic and artistic on the one hand—to whom, when we think of it, so much of the Scripture specially appeals that it almost might seem to have been prepared exclusively for them—and on the other the philosophical mind, which dwells in the abstract, which would extricate principles from all phenomena, dissolve details into ultimate statements, and put aside incidents, how striking soever, for general truths:—what immense fields are open to each within the Bible.

Divide morally, if you will. Take the man of strictly ethical tendencies, or him of a philosophical bent; or him in whom the deeper sensibilities to devout adoration are most active and dominant. Take the very same mind, in either one of all these classes, in any one of all the moods through which it can possibly pass in its experience: and notice how remarkably the Bible is adapted to each in its turn, as each presents itself to consciousness.

In despondency, one withdraws from everything else to find solace and cheer in these sympathetic, reviving pages, and to learn from them that the saddest soul shall again praise God. In joy and hope, no other language is so adequate as theirs to the feeling which then dilates the heart, and their words become wings as on them we are borne through the airs empyreal. When conscience-stricken for some great sin, when teased by an inward and sore unrest, when afraid of death, when oppressed by the thought of the world's crimes, when bereft of friends, deserted of children, and baffled in every worldly plan, when most unnerved, and almost drained of courage, faith, and vital enterprise; or when, on the other hand, confident, elastic, with all the earth shining around us as we march shouting toward success;—in our moods of uttermost self-distrust; in our most excited and lofty moments, when full of force, wide-visioned, eager, fearful of nothing, ambitious of all things, and rising over difficulties as the eagle over winds;—still is there something in the experience recorded for us in the Bible that parallels ours, and something in the very words which record it which has a peculiar charm for our minds.

Almost every feeling finds a voice in the Psalms. But here are not their only expressions. The prophecies contain them. They break upon us through scores of narratives, and in hundreds of incidents. And there is not a note of human emotion, from the plaint of despondency, or the wail of despair, up to the noblest Christian war-hymn,—yea, up to the very *Te Deum* of saints, celebrating the final attainment of Heaven—that is not somewhere sounded in the Bible.

To all occasions, it is therefore of necessity equally suitable; to birth and to burial, to baptism and marriage, to festival and

to fast. On the day that commemorates the Lord's crucifixion, as we ponder the pages over which broods the darkness that was then upon Calvary, what passages from Isaiah or from the Psalms come trooping back upon our thoughts! On the day that celebrates his resurrection, while the very narrative seems touched with a lustre from his ascension, how like celestial chariots are the words of apostolic expectation that bear us with them toward him on high!

The very unbeliever is reached and addressed by this many-voiced volume; and though he shut his ear to its message, he cannot wholly escape its impression. The fact that no other book in the world has called out against it such various assaults, passionately made by dissimilar minds, is proof at least that it touches alike all classes of persons, and that even though men hate its truths, they cannot wholly disregard its appeal. It is a memorable proof of its power, that the fiercest battle it has to fight is with those whom it has disciplined for the contest. Through those who went before them, and through those who surround them, if not by direct action on themselves, it has educated the minds of even its critics; and they who now despise it as narrow, or possibly assail it as distinctly untrue, are scholars and authors, not serfs on the soil, or robbers on the sea, only because their ancestors read and loved the Book they deride.

Out of this same adaptation, too, to different minds, in diverse states, comes a further and equal adaptation in the Bible to widely dissimilar states of society; to conditions and tempers in public communities, as remote from each other as are pains from delights.

In slavery, the oppressed and fettered read it, if they have been able to master the art, or otherwise hear its stories read, with an enjoyment which no other equals. Not merely its truths, but the forms in which those truths are brought, have then for them a constant fascination. The Psalms are their liturgy. The prophetic words burn like fire on their lips. The Jewish captivity, in Egypt or in Babylon, is as real to them as their own; and the miracles of the Exodus need no illustration, and almost no proof, to their eager souls. Their conscious longing supplies these both.

When a people dwells in a settled prosperity—agricultural, mechanical, commercial, political—when education goes gradually forward, and each generation advances somewhat on that before it, while neither among them is signally distinguished by wide and deep intellectual movements,—then men study the Scriptures as they cultivate their fields, steadily, patiently, and with silent reward. Their quiet minds derive from its so various forms a needed stimulus. Its records of heroism are an energizing force to them. Creeds are then apt to become common-place, and to

lose their vitality amid the general calm. But the tragedy and the triumph with which these crowded pages are freighted, bring elements of strange glory into the life that would have been monotonously prosperous; and letters and laws, as well as action, derive greatness and spirit from this vitalizing book.

When the searching scientific spirit awakens among men, and they eagerly turn from outward affairs to hunt the records that are grooved upon rocks, or blazoned on stars, or hid in perishable human memorials, then the complex and difficult structure of the Bible becomes to them of inestimable worth. They search it through, that they may compress its substance into statements, and frame from it all a grand syllabus of doctrine. Or, if they pursue any line of research outside its limits, it still meets them in each, and challenges them to new study of itself; to ransack its histories; to interpret the records of the creation or the flood, presented in the Genesis; to give, if they can, a more natural division of the animal kingdom than that of Moses; or a more exact description of Egypt than is that suggested in the Exodus. And so the seeming paradox is presented that the most inquisitive and scientific of peoples come always back to the earliest books, to the same which the Barbarian ponders, as the ever new field for their research.

When the esthetic spirit reigns throughout a nation, and pencils strew its walls with light, and quarries rise as if by magic into buildings of a vast and musical majesty,—then how the wondrous stories of the Bible, and especially the incidents it relates of the Lord, are stamped in colors and gold on windows; how its songs create, and wed themselves with, immortal melodies; how its mighty figures turn the marble almost to life, that they may stand again before us; how its picturesque scenes start forth upon the canvass, and are multiplied by the burin, for all delighted eyes to see.

And when, as so often has been the case, the whole Nation is tumultuously stirred to its centre, by the sudden inrush of revolutionary ideas, or by the temper that is called into exercise in some immense and dread emergency,—then how, as in our recent experience, the very terms and texts of the Bible seem prearranged for that demand. It is not, then, a mere treatise of religion. It is not simply a careful collection of ancient records. It throbs and quivers with the very emotions which to us are so new. It shows us garments rolled in blood. It lifts standards and gonfalons before our faint and wavering sight. Its images of armor, armies, battle, of march, struggle, sacrifice, victory, are so needful then, that without them it must fail to hold our attention; but they are so numerous, that it seems for the time as if the whole Bible were made up of them. And so its language becomes then universal. The man of the world finds no other

so adequate ; and the statesman but repeats what the pulpit had taught him. Parts of the Scripture which had been wholly overlooked, become at once instinct with life. The national experience flashes such interpreting light upon them, that forgotten heroes reassume personality, and the long-accomplished plans of God again move before us like sensible squadrons. Again the blast of the ancient war-trumpets shakes the blood in our pulses. Again the successful though desperate valor of those who fought beneath God's impulse makes us triumphant in darkest hours. And the very child's hymns, inspired by the Scripture, become battle-songs of armies, and mingle with the stormiest thunders of campaigns.

So, on all sides, look from what point soever we will, the Bible, by reason of its special constitution, becomes Universal in the range of its address ; a Book for the World ; for the savage in his woods, and for the savan ; for Abelard in his cloister, and for St. Louis on his throne ; for Erasmus in his study, and for the humblest German peasant ; for ironside soldiers, and for the children that climb to their rugged arms and rest there, as violets upon rocks ; for William of Nassau, holding an exasperated empire at bay, and for the humble mechanics and women who read the Scriptures in a room overlooking the city-square, by the light of the flames in which their comrades are consumed.

By reason of the composite structure of the Bible it is, in great part, that as Coleridge has eloquently said : " The great fundamental truths of religion are in Christian countries taught so early, under such circumstances, and in such close and vital association with whatever makes or marks reality for our infant minds, that the words ever after represent sensations, feelings, vital assurances, sense of reality, rather than thoughts or distinct conceptions. . . . These great first truths, these good and gracious tidings, these holy and humanizing spells, in the pre-conformity to which our very humanity may be said to consist, are so infused, that it were but a tame and inadequate expression to say we all take them for granted." And equally, by reason of the same unique constitution of the Bible, it becomes also true that when the last hours of life are reached, and the man fatigued with vast intellectual endeavors and plans sinks slowly downward to his rest, the same touching or inspiring stories, which he heard at first from mother's or from teacher's lips, come up as freshly as when he heard them. He turns from all treatises, to ponder the parables. He may not read the epistles as much as he did in middle life, but the words of Christ are sweeter than ever, the Psalms more precious. And the mind returns from all its excursions to poise itself at last and surely upon the sublime supports of the Scripture ; as the ship, returning from other coasts, and tempest-lashed seas, swings into its harbor ; as

the bird, circling back from his furthest flight, settles down to his nest.

No tribe has yet been found on earth for which the Bible, translated properly into their tongue, has not had a voice so especially appropriate that, it was at once at home among them. No people shall be found on earth, so cultured and noble, so rich in wisdom, so full of love, that the Bible will not to them have a value that grows only greater as their culture advances; that is more fully and joyfully recognized as they draw nearer the perfect state. As the air enwraps with invisible mantle all continents and seas; as the light from its throne streams alike upon all, to enlighten and warm; as the vegetative force works as plainly and constantly on the heath as on the hill, in most sequestered flocks and glens, and round the roughest edge of rocks, as on the vast expanse of prairies—so this supreme and mighty Book, **THE BOOK OF MANKIND**, finds no domain inaccessible to it, and no fragment of the race for which it has not a vitalizing power. It takes rank of right among the great elemental forces for which the Earth is the arena. It underlies institutions, outlasts civilizations, and dominates empires. And in the cabin as in the castle, in mine, and forum, and factory, and chapel, in the fore-castle, the prison, the university, the home, it is fitted to be equally and always familiar; the constant instrument of man's moral advancement; the inexhaustible source of his spiritual life.

Do we need, then, my Brethren, any other demonstration that this book is **DIVINE**?

No matter what skepticism may allege to the contrary, or what difficulties may sometimes embarrass our minds, as points which are not yet wholly cleared arrest our thoughts. Is it possible that a book so universal as this in its reach should not be Divine? Divine in plan, and in special construction, as well as in the great system of thought which it presents? Did simply unaided human minds, from the narrowest and least sympathetic of the peoples, with no literary training, under the darkness of centuries earlier than of Solon or of Homer, prepare a book so comical as this in its fitness to the race? Bring all the other component parts of the world's literature to comparison with it,—poetries, histories, treatises, orations, philosophies, sciences, codes of law, the utterances of men imperially endowed, the products of scholars, jurists, schools, whose names mark eras for their nations,—put anything you choose, from the immense aggregate, in comparison with this, and how they fade, as lights of the earth before the sun; how they dwindle into littleness as turrets and spires beneath the stars.

Surely, unless all experience is a lie, and all argument a dream, but One Mind that ever has wrought in the earth was competent

to this: to make a Book, through so many writers, which the Malay should love, as well as we; which Newton should cherish as of all most precious, and Pascal should accept as furnishing in its structure a new proof of Christianity, and which the ragged and unkempt child, picked out of the streets, or drawn from the depths of vilest slums, should find to him the most fascinating of volumes. The theophany of Sinai was more striking than this; but even it was scarcely more vivid in its exhibition of the presence of God. And if now it were written in intelligible lightnings on yonder sky, "The Bible is from God," and underneath the declaration were stamped, in interwoven thunderbolts, the very signature of Jehovah, it could hardly be more demonstrative than this of his authorship in the Scripture. We meet the mind that built the earth, when we open the leaves of this Book of the World.

And what an argument comes to us for the spread of it, what vast incitements to this press upon us, when we think, on the one hand, of Him from whom it comes, to the world, and, on the other, of the race for which it has been prepared!

It is the one bond of intellectual unity between countries and centuries. Other books pass away, however brilliant, however great. Only this abideth forever. And the skin-clothed spearman of the woods, converted to Christ, is brought through it to intellectual sympathy with the highest of Christian statesmen and scholars. The earliest age is linked to the latest, through its influence upon each; and the figures that walk before our thought amid the auroral dawn of history, stretch forward their hands to join and grasp in common love for it those white-robed saints who shine before us in coming ages, cinctured and crowned with millennial beauty.

It is a Book full of stimulating force, and purifying power. It is not like the magical sign in the Faust, across which, if it were accurately drawn on the threshold, Mephistopheles could not pass. It is not like a sacrament, given physically, and accepted mechanically, which claims by its direct operation to ally men to God, and to make them safe without change in their character. It is a vast treasury of intellectual and moral appeal; by which, whoever lovingly ponders it shall be impressed, impenetrated, transformed, made a son or daughter of the Almighty, and assimilated in spirit to all that is Godlike. Its fruits are thus seen in public life, as well as in private. All welfare comes from its inspirations, and the best civilizations are conditioned on its power.

It is a Book that never will cease to be as perfect as now; as perfect in itself, and in its interior fitness to the race; a Book, therefore, of which no conceivable assaults will impair, though they may hinder, its power to bless; a Book that will abide, till human nature has been made over. The present archbishop of

Westminster has affirmed, in a recent essay, that "the Scriptures separated from the Church perish." But the truth is that the Scriptures preserve the Church, and keep it from perishing; and that nowhere are they so omnipresent and so influential, as where the Church, in his sense of the word—as a vast organization of priestly function and prelate prerogative—has never had or has lost its power. They will perish, not when the Roman hierarchy does, but only when the earth does, for which they were made, and the living souls of men on the earth, to which they were adapted by God. And even then their influence will remain, in brighter effects, in grander spheres.

How then the work of distributing the Bible grows larger before us, opens out over still immenser tracts, as we consider it! As originally systematically commenced in England, it sought, we know, only to supply copies of the Scripture to the scattered and needy Welsh population among their mountains. But even then a minister present was moved to say, "Yes, certainly to them; but if to them, why not to the World?" And that thought has grown in the mind of the church, that same deep impulse has moved in its heart, from that hour to this. The thought and the impulse were never so central, so quickening and inspiring, as at this very moment; and the light thus kindled shines higher always toward perfect day. Languages that had not the Bible now have it. Languages that had not alphabetical forms have been furnished with these, that it may utter its voices through them. Commerce has been subsidized, great mechanisms employed, institutions established, and the forces of nature made to coöperate, to give it ever wider sweep. And plainly nothing will ever again content for an hour the mind of intelligent Protestant Christendom, that falls short of the purpose of making this Book as accessible and familiar as already it is to us and our children to every person who lives on the earth; to all who shall hereafter live here, to the end of man's history.

It is the grandest work of time; the work in which angels might pray and plead to be permitted to take a part: to make the Bible universal as the Race. For such a distribution it is adapted. Toward such its own predictions point. And never till that has been accomplished, will his design have been fulfilled who gave it as he did that every man, of every land and every time, might hear it speak in his own tongue, and in that form of moral appeal which is to him the most impressive, the gracious and mighty works of God.

For this, then, be it ours to plan; for this to work; for this to give, till all offices of earth are ended for us in the offices of heaven; and till the Bible itself, fulfilling its function, has lost its hold—not on our memory, but on our attention—as we look face to face on God! And unto Him who gave, who guards, who will defend it, be all the praise! Amen.

